

# The Unguessed Riddle

By Ralph H. Craig



"YOU have to 'step lively' in this profession, after once getting under way," mused

Miss Elsie Ferguson, as with a radiant smile she held up the prompt-book of "Primrose," in which she was making the acquaintance of her newly assigned rôle. "I must have made a big hit in rehearsing 'Eva,' for here, before it was produced, I am promoted to the leading part in a Comédie Française piece by Cailavet and De Flers, the authors of John Drew's 'Inconstant George' and Miss Billie Burke's 'Love Watches,' among other things. I ought to feel proud, but I'm just glad."


There is no music with this new comedy; but in all other respects it is as truly Fergusonian as if it had been written expressly to exploit the variegated talents of the temperamental Elsie. It is a story of France

of to-day, yet its atmosphere is feudal and ecclesiastical, of the old régime as contrasted with the new. Primrose, the heroine, is in love with a serious but romantic captain of industry, who has made a fortune in American mines, and then—as he thinks—lost it. For this reason he chivalrously decides not to involve the girl in a poverty-stricken love match, so he assumes indifference and goes away. When we state that there is a good old worldly Cardinal de Merance in Primrose's family, it is a foregone conclusion that the young lady's determination to take holy vows will be thwarted on the threshold

The real Elsie Ferguson, and as Dolly Madison in "The First Lady in the Land,"

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of the accomplished horsewoman and tireless walker. A certain contralto note in her ordinarily gentle voice gives warning of intensity and passion. Not so very deeply hidden behind her April smiles are April tears. Her eyes are as blue as cigarette smoke—and where there's smoke there must be fire.

"Do you consider yourself a strong emotional actress, Miss Ferguson?"

"Why, I don't know exactly. Some think I am," she replied.


"At any rate, you think you have a plausible excuse for treading the 'Primrose' path of Caillavet-DeFlers, in company with John Drew and Billie

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of the convent, and that the right sort of ending is assured to a story that sparkles with wit and throbs with tender sentiment.

This is the third character of aristocratic distinction that Miss Ferguson—who is undoubtedly the most original and piquante of our younger serio-comediennes—has impersonated within the last three or four years. Only last season she was Dolly Madison, the "First Lady in the Land"; and in Channing Pollock's not yet forgotten romance of European royalty in a Harlem flat she was "Such a Little Queen" that she still wears an invisible crown.

There is a strong reenforcement of character behind Elsie Ferguson's refined and rather pensive blonde prettiness. In her elegant slimness is the athletic spring



Burke, and others of that ilk?" I asked her next.

"Yes. And I believe, anyway, that if the public care for you at all, they like to have you come back each season in something different. They like to have you keep them guessing. I want to be an unguessed riddle. I hope they won't solve me, and paste a label on, for quite a while yet."